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SUCCESS STORY

A Community Volunteer Helps Muslim Children Get Back to School

More than 116 children are back in school in a remote village in India thanks to community-led efforts and USAID support

Photo: Amy Wielkoszewski/ USAID



“Today, the village elders, who resisted my efforts earlier, are proud of me. My aim is to get everyone in my village educated; especially girls,” says Tara Bano, a volunteer teacher at a recently re-opened madrasa in Uttar Pradesh, India

Children in a remote village in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh can now go to school, thanks to a volunteer teacher supported by USAID’s Minority Education for Growth and Advancement – Skills for Youth (MEGA- SkY) program.

For more than 11 years, the Madrasa (a Muslim religious school) in Parmandapur village had been closed for lack of resources, leaving local children with nowhere to go to school. Tara Bano, a young university student from the same village, and a MEGA-SkY volunteer, approached community leaders about re-opening the long-abandoned Madrasa. By working with community groups and volunteers, MEGA-SkY provides over 30,000 disadvantaged students, particularly those in minority communities, with educational opportunities that will better prepare them to enter India’s formal education system.

The training Tara received from USAID strengthened her resolve to re-start the Madrasa and provide educational opportunities to disadvantaged children in her community. But community leaders greeted her efforts with skepticism and ridicule.

Undaunted and tired of community indifference, Tara took matters into her own hands. With the help of village children, she broke into the Madrasa and simply began teaching classes! Word spread and parents began enrolling their children. Within a few months, Tara had 116 students, including 54 girls, regularly attending school. Tara’s enthusiasm and commitment and the children’s desire to learn convinced the community leaders that they needed to support the school. USAID provided Tara with two additional volunteer teachers, books, and teaching materials, and helped her get the community more involved. Now community members are working together to get the Madrasa its own building, which it will need for formal government recognition.

For many children, this Madrasa provided their first-ever exposure to formal education. Tara is a role model for many and the hope is that parents in neighboring villages will see the success of this Madrasa and work to promote education in their own communities.